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at length. The note to The Confessions
is from a 1956 typescript prepared by
Stephensen from the original galleys. The
lengthy letter to J.K. Moir is
reproduced from the Oceania Oasis
newsletter.

from P.R.STEPHENSEN,
10 MOOR STREET,
SANDRINGHAM, S.8.,
MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

12th December, 1953

Gerald Yorke, Esq.,
5 Montague Square,
LONDON W.1.

Dear Gerald Yorke,

You will perhaps be surprised to have a letter from me, as it is about twenty-three years since we last met, in the brief heyday of the Mandrake Press! I left England in 1931, to return to my native land, Australia, where I have remained ever since, enjoying the dolce far niente of this part of the world, as remote as possible from Europe's silly and tragic periodical holocausts. I have no thought of ever returning to England, which appears to me, from this distance, to be thoroughly doomed and damned. Life in Australia is in many respects crude and raw, but at least it can improve, while Europe can only get worse, having reached and passed its zenith. I hope you are enjoying health, prosperity, serenity of mind, etc., and that the War of 1939-45 left you personally undamaged. My wife, Winifred, whom you met at Knockholt while we were trying to keep A.C. out of mischief there, joins me in sending greetings to you.

Recently I read "The Great Beast", by John Symonds, an interesting effort, but certainly not the last word on A.C., who was a better man than Symonds apparently realised. I find it very difficult to believe that the old Beast could take "eleven whole grains" of heroin per diem, as J.S. asserts on p.295. I may be considered a little prejudiced against Symonds since he dismisses my little work on A.C. as "an arid apologia" (p.269). My purpose was to debunk the sensationalism attached to the Crowley Legend, no easy task. Symonds in his book has succumbed to the temptation of being sensational, and to that extent leaves a big problem in criticism quite unsolved.

On the same page (269) he asserts that you and Germer each put in a thousand pounds to the Mandrake Press. My recollections are that this money was not actually put into share-capital, but was only promised. If it had been put in, all the volumes of the "Confessions" would have been published. We folded up through lack of capital, but also because A.C. put the Basilisk Eye on my unfortunate co-director, "Teddy" Goldston, and frightened hell out of him, through sheer deviltry. Goldston was an orthodox Jew and a minor freemason. I believe that the learned Dr Cecil Roth (one of whose books we published) and several booksellers who were freemasons approached Goldston and warned him of an awful fate that would be his if he continued to be associated with that BAD MAN, that wicked, wicked A.C.

After this lapse of time, I do not exactly recollect why we closed down the Mandrake Press, but the impression that remains in my memory is that Goldston jibbed through fear of awful unnamed consequences if we published the Third Volume, and that A.C. (delighted in his perverse way) encouraged that fear with all the magical power at his command, and I think also sued Goldston in the Courts on some pretext or other. The point is not very important, except that I am writing a book of my reminiscences, which will include a chapter on my brief but interesting association with A.C., and I shall have to correct the mis-statement by Symonds about that £2,000. Did you perchance keep any documentary record of your investment, for example, the share certificate, if one was issued to you?

There is a man living in Melbourne named Norman Robb, a bookseller, of 190 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, who has a perfectly marvellous collection of Crowleyana. He has made the collection for his own pleasure, and not qua bookseller. I believe that Robb's interest in Crowley is the same as my own, primarily literary, not esoteric. About 1922 he wrote an article on Crowley's poetry, in an Australian periodical named "The New Outlook", and since then, i.e. for over thirty years, he has bought every book by or about Crowley that he could get. He recently showed me his collection, which is prodigious. A man named G.F.Sims, of "Peacocks", Hurst, Bucks., (who is perhaps known to you?) has for some time past been sending "Crowley items" to Robb, among them all kinds of things such as copies of unpublished works (typescripts) and letters written by Crowley to various people, including (to my astonishment) about a hundred or more letters to Louis Wilkinson.

Robb (whom I had not known personally) got in touch with me a few weeks ago, to see if perchance I had preserved any of Crowley's precious words. Among my unsorted papers I have found galley proofs of "Golden Twigs", which the Mandrake Press had nearly ready to publish. I believe (but am not sure) that I have somewhere the galley-proofs of the "missing" Volume III of the autohagiography! I have promised Robb that I will look for it, as soon as I can find the time to turn out old boxes and trunks in which it may somewhere lie hidden. Apart from this, I have nothing of Crowley's except some printed books, of which Robb already has copies in his collection.

Robb's collection, so remarkably made in faraway Australia, will undoubtedly become extremely valuable some day (I do not mean in terms of vulgar coin) as a basis for serious studies in Crowley's esoteric and literary achievements. My interest in him remains, as it always was, simply in the literary aspect of his works. I consider him one of the very greatest masters of English prose, especially in his short stories. When he has been dead long enough, the hypocritical English will be very proud of having produced — and crucified — such a genius!

One of my reasons for writing this letter to you is to ask, if you will give Robb any help you can to make his collection of Crowleyana as complete as possible. I am having a typed copy of "Golden Twigs" made for him from the Galley-proofs I have fortuitously preserved. What he is most anxious to acquire is a typed copy of the "Simon Iff" detective-stories. I believe these originally appeared in a magazine published in New York named "The International". Do you know what became of the file of "The International"? I remember seeing it when I went through Crowley's papers to write my arid apologia, in 1930.

Robb is not a wealthy man, but he would be able and willing to pay any reasonable price to obtain the files of "The International", or typed copies of the "Simon Iff" stories. I think it is a good idea to have a complete collection of Crowley's works safely stored in Australia, so that they will be preserved here when London and New York get atom-bombed in 1957 E.V. or earlier! Apart from that possibility, it is advisable to spread works of literary merit in various countries, to survive hazards of natural or supernatural cataclysms, so that civilization may have a chance of reviving, from time to time.

Do you know Regardie's address? If so, would you oblige me with it? I should like to hear how he is progressing. He lived with me, as you may remember, for quite a while, and I have quite an affectionate memory of him.

Another request, if I am not making too many! Robb would like to have a certified copy of Crowley's Will, that is the Last Will and Testament admitted to probate, together with the names and addresses of his Executors. If you would be so kind as to obtain this from Somerset House (or wherever Wills are kept), an officially stamped copy, together with a note of the charges of having the copy made, I shall send you the cost of it by return mail, and present the document to Robb's Archives.

I have an idea (not clearly formulated) that I could arrange to have Crowley's Complete (or selected) Short Stories published in Australia, of course only by arrangement with his Executors. Who were his heirs? I am not actually engaged in publishing books now in Australia, but I am well-known here as a professional Man of Letters and book-editor. I would be prepared to edit his collected short stories, with a memoir, and believe I could have them well published here, with some arrangements for distribution also in Britain and the U.S.A. You remember I published three of them in a Mandrake Booklet, and I had "Golden Twigs" nearly ready for publication when the mysterious collapse of the Mandrake Press occurred. These plus the "Simon Iff" stories would make an interesting volume. I should very much like to know what you think of this idea. Please answer by air-mail, if you don't mind, as ship-mail is so slow. With this, Yuletide Greetings!

Yours sincerely,



from P.R.STEPHENSEN,
10 MOOR STREET,
SANDRINGHAM, S.8.,
Victoria, Australia.

26th January, 1954

Mr Gerald Yorke,
5 Montague Square,
LONDON, W.1.

Dear Yorke,

Your letter of Christmas Eve reached me on New Year's Day, an indication of the speed of air-mails over 12,000 miles! I was very pleased to hear that you are well and still flourishing. I have delayed replying until I had a talk with Norman Robb, who is in a state of great pleasure at having now made contact with you. He has been on a trip to Sydney for a week, and I had a card from him with the very interesting news that he has unearthed Frank Bennett's daughter, who has a large trunk with all the A.C. material in it. Robb will of course be writing to you about this, and is naturally pleased that he will be able to send you something from Australia for your collection of Crowleyana, in exchange for what you will be sending him.

Luckily we had a third copy of GOLDEN TWIGS made in typescript. Robb paid all the costs of typing these, but the copying was done under my eye. He will be sending you the extra copy we luckily had made.

I have not yet found the galley-proofs of Vol.III of the "Hag", but I'll admit that I have not had ~~time~~ to look for them yet, as this happens to be an exceptionally busy time for me. But I realise the necessity of making the search, and shall do so as soon as I can. It will be something in the nature of a miracle if I have preserved them, as I have handled thousands of manuscripts and proofs since I left the Mandrake Press. However there is some kind of a fatality connected with that third volume, and I suppose I have it, somewhere among my many boxes of papers.

I shall write to Regardie, and also to Germer, to put them in touch with Robb, who is marvellously keen to make his collection of Crowleyana as complete as possible. If Germer will consent to an Australian edition of GOLDEN TWIGS, I'll do my best to arrange publication of an edition of it here.

In a few days I shall be sending you a little book containing my recollections of the Fanfrolico Press (of which I was the Manager before I started the Mandrake Press). It makes an incident. reference to A.C. which will qualify it for your collection. This little book is printed by an amateur on a primitive press. I wrote the text more or less to help him make a start with limited edition:

He (the printer of the book, Walter Stone) is the Secretary of the Book Collectors' Society of Australia, and editor of their monthly multigraphed bulletin, "Biblionews". They have about 100 members. I mention this because Stone has implored me to write my recollections of A.C., to be printed as a little limited edition, and I have promised to do so. Evidently "The Great Beast" has aroused considerable interest among the literati in Australia, and this is what prompted Stone to get in touch with me, and ask me to write something for him about A.C. There was always an interest in A.C. here, partly due to Frank Bennett's propaganda in Sydney in the 1920s. I have quite often been asked for information about him, but you can imagine my surprise and pleasure when Robb sought me out a couple of months ago, and showed me his extensive collection. He is a rare bird, a bookseller who really reads the books he sells, and in consequence he has built up a clientele of all the worthwhile literary people in Melbourne. He and his wife together manage their shop, which is in a very good business street in Melbourne (near Parliament House) and they live in a nice flat near the Fitzroy Gardens in a central position in Melbourne. There he proudly displays to his many callers his fine collections of Crowley, Blake, Chesterton, Ford Madox Ford — an oddly-assorted quartette — with infectious enthusiasm. I think he has an almost-complete collection of Blake and the other two, but Crowley is the apple of his eye.

By one of those mad coincidences, Robb phoned to me when I had reached this stage in my letter to you. He got back from Sydney last night. He and his wife and two friends (one a keen Egyptologist) came down to see us (I live at the seaside, half-an-hour from Melbourne, and it is a hot Summer's evening). They left a few minutes ago, so I can resume my letter. While in Sydney he met a man named Charteris, who is married to Frank Bennett's daughter. The trunk of Crowley material is stored in a basement, under stacks of furniture, but they have promised to dig it out, and make copies of anything that Robb wants copied from it (of which in due course you will also get copies from Robb). Further, Robb found a chap named Phillips, who had typescripts of some items including the Tao Teh King, which he has loaned to Robb for copying. I shall be going to Sydney on a visit in March, and shall go through Frank Bennett's trunk then, or at any rate shall see Charteris and Phillips, who have both told Robb that they want to meet me. It appears that Charteris called at my office in Sydney some years ago (when I was running a Nationalist monthly paper) but I was out and he for some reason did not call again. All this adds up to an indication that there is quite an interest in A.C.'s work and life in Australia, in one way and another. This will be increased if I publish a little monograph on him, to prepare the way for an edition of GOLDEN TWIGS. With Robb's collection to refer to, I shall attempt some literary evaluation of the dear old Beast, plus my few personal recollections of him in the Mandrake Press phase of his career. My wife and I never had the slightest fear of A.C.'s occult powers. We viewed him as entirely benevolent, though somewhat a spilt child! A poet in action...

I was very pleased to have your reminders of what happened in the Mandrake Press after I left it. I am not going to bring this into my published reminiscences, except insofar as may be necessary to correct wrong impressions conveyed by Symonds.

It appears to me that Thynne was a "go-getter", a professional Company Promoter, but a pleasant fellow, who appeared on the scene with promises to raise capital, but in fact raised capital only from Jo Pailthorpe (is she still alive?) and from you and perhaps Cora Germer (is Cora still married to Germer?).

^{Thynne} He and A.C. probably carved up this money in some way between themselves. It was certainly not made available for publishing-purposes while I was the Manager. Not liking the setup, I backed out, and Hanchant became the Manager, but apparently no books were produced under his management.

The real or "magical" explanation was that A.C. did not want the Third Volume to be published. He frightened Hell out of Goldston and in some way that I don't remember made me feel discouraged. One thing he did was to try to get us to hold an exhibition of his paintings, of which about fifty were at one time hung in my office, and in other ways made a damn nuisance of himself instead of leaving me alone to get on with the serious business of publishing the Hag.

We were all a lot younger and less experienced then than we are now! If you and Cora Germer had made the capital available to me and Goldston, without interference from Thynne and A.C.'s silly goings-on, it would have been put into the production of books, instead of into dinners at Oddenino's and Simpsons for Thynne and A.C., which is where I now think most of it went!

However, that is all ancient history now, but I still retain the most affectionate memory of A.C. as an essentially lovable character and undoubtedly a man of outstanding intellectual and literary ability; possibly one of the greatest writers England has ever produced, and certainly a man of extraordinary mental courage. I think that all who ever came in contact with him benefited from that contact, except those like Norman Mudd — or, in a different sense, Thynne — who tried to play a game of their own, or "use" Crowley for some ulterior purpose. Those who, like yourself, or, say, Louis Wilkinson, J.W.N. Sullivan, J.F.C. Fuller and myself, who liked Crowley and tried to help him, without seeking gain, were benefited greatly by the contact with his amazingly original mind. Such benefits came indirectly, and perhaps belatedly, but were none the less real. At any rate, no man was ever quite the same after knowing Crowley! Acting foolishly himself, he could purge folly from others, and this may be the ultimate effect of his life and works when they are seen in the perspective of time.

Do you ever see Tom Driberg, M.P.? He was a friend of mine at Oxford, 1924-27, and afterwards, and at that time was a student

of A.C.'s works. He stayed with me and Winifred at our flat in Earl's Court for awhile soon after he came down from Oxford (this was before I had met Crowley), but I lost touch with him after he joined the Daily Express. I mention this only in case he may have some letters of Crowley's for your collection. If you ever see him, please give him kindest wishes from Winifred and myself. He wrote a poem to some marigolds which incongruously decorated the interior of the Water Closet bowl at our flat! His name comes to mind as another who (perhaps without knowing or acknowledging it) benefited ultimately from the mental compurgation that a study of Crowley's works entails!

What happened to A.C.'s paintings? I think Robb would be in the seventh heaven of delight if he could obtain one or two of them. In fact I wish I had asked A.C. to give me the one of the Red Monk Carrying a Black Goat Across the White Snow to Nowhere. (This was a title I myself suggested for that picture, which I had reproduced in colour on the prospectus of the "Confessions".)

I have not yet written to Regardie, but shall do so, as Robb has found his address in the Los Angeles Telephone Directory at the American Consulate in Melbourne. I shall be very sorry if he has taken the Left Hand Path, as I have every reason to know that he was a most earnest chela of A.C.'s. When he lived with us at Toy's Hill in Kent, we gave him a hut to himself, in which he performed certain exercises you know of very thoroughly, so much so that we thought he had poisoned his arm with razor-blade cuts, it swelled up so.

One other little point from my recollections. I was sitting with A.C. one evening in Kleinfeld's Fitzroy Tavern, drinking pernod, when Betty May came in. This was in 1929 or 1930, some time after Raoul Loveday's death. Tough little egg that she was, she came up to A.C. with a kind of adoration in her eyes and whole demeanour, and spoke to him with the naive respect one would expect to see in a fourteen-year-old girl speaking to a bishop after a confirmation service. She was evidently in awe, but not at all in fear of him. How different was the version the journalists extracted from her! Similarly I have seen the same real respect shown to A.C. by Peter Warlock, Nina Hammet, T.W. Earp and many more who were no fools.

If it is not too long, would you mind having a copy made for me and for Robb of the suppressed part of my THE LEGEND OF ALEISTER CROWLEY (containing the attack on Beaverbrook)? I would include it, or a summary of it, in the little monograph I now propose to write.

What ages are your boys? If they would like some stamps or books from Australia, I'd be pleased to send them some. If there is anything I could do for you here, just let me know at any time. Oil and uranium have now been found in Australia, the latter in large quantities, and we think a boom is coming here.

Kindest wishes,
Yours sincerely,

[P.R. Stephensen]

10 MOOR STREET,
SANDRINGHAM, S.8.,
Victoria, Australia.

6th February, 1956

Mr KARL GERMER,
HAMPTON, N.J., USA.

My Dear Karl Germer,

Not intentional rudeness, but sheer lack of system in correspondence is the reason for my long delay in replying to two friendly letters which I received from you, the first of 20th February, 1954. I am heavily overworked. A professional writer has very little time to write letters!

But perhaps I was waiting for something to happen, which has now happened. At about 4 p.m., 4th February, 1956 (Australian time) I found the Galley Proofs of Volume III of A.C.'s "Confessions"!

These (presumably the only copy in English in the world) have been buried among my masses of papers for about 26 years, and I have been looking for them for the past two years; and now EUREKA! I have found them!

works There are 87 galleys, but one Galley (No.20) is missing. I have given the galleys to Robb to copy for himself, you and ~~Germer~~. He will then return the galleys to me, and I will keep them safely (for my heirs).

The above will be my address until 4th April next. Then Winifred & I will be moving to Sydney (600 miles from here) to live. A permanent address there would be:

P.R.STEPHENSON,
c/o JOHN W. LOCKYER,
105 Pitt Road,
NORTH CURL CURL, N.S.W.
Australia.

(John Lockyer is my stepson). I have no precise plan as yet for publishing A.C.'s "Short Stories" in Australia, or for writing my ~~my~~ little Memoir of him, as both these projects (especially the former) would require financing; but I hope to accomplish one or both of these things eventually.

Winifred joins me in sending kindest regards to you. We are all a quarter-of-a-century older and I hope wiser than in the Mandrake Press days; but I am more convinced now than ever that A.C. was a superb personality.

With warmest regards to you, always,
Yours sincerely,

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With warmest regards to you, always,
Yours sincerely,

THE CONFESSIONS OF ALEISTER CROWLEY

Volume III

A Note by P. R. Stephensen

After two volumes of The Confessions of Aleister Crowley had been published, and when the third volume was already set in type, A.C. became "difficult", and had some kind of row with my co-director in Mandrake Press Ltd. (Edward Goldston). The result was that Crowley, with Gerald Yorke, Karl Germer, and a company-promoter named Major Thynne made an offer to take over Mandrake Press Ltd. from me and Goldston.

Crowley thoroughly frightened Goldston into agreeing to this, and I, becoming disgusted at A.C.'s shenanigans, also agreed. In consequence, the Mandrake Press went bung under its new management. Poor old Yorke and a Harley Street psycho-analyst named Grace Palethorpe, M.D. lost the money they put into it. Cora Germer lost some too, I suppose. Crowley and Major Thynne did well out of it, but VOLUME III was not published. I went back home to Australia; but among my papers I kept galley-proofs of GOLDEN TWIGS and of VOL. III., perhaps fortuitously.

These proofs lay buried in my trunks from 1932 until 1954, when Norman Robb pestered me for Crowley relics. I first found GOLDEN TWIGS, but could not find VOL. III. Then suddenly, on 4th February, 1956, I found them and gave them to Norman Robb to copy. Aleister Crowley was a master of prose style, and an English genius, martyred by the English, who always martyr their geniuses, if possible.

(Signed) P.R. STEPHENSEN

Melbourne, Feb., 1956.

Karl Germer
Hampton N.J.

February 20, 1954.

Mr. P.R. Stephensen
10 Moor Street
Sandringham S.8
Victoria, Australia.

My dear Stephensen:

It was a surprise to hear from Yorke that he had located you, and a real pleasure to read your letter to Yorke of Jan. 26th, which he sent on to me, as in many respects we work closely together. If there were only more people with your moral and spiritual outlook in the world. This may ~~seem~~ sound crude, but you cannot imagine how deeply your letter impressed me!

I am glad to hear that you have apparently established yourself solidly in Australia, and I hope you and Winifred are in splendid health.

A letter to Robb went off two days ago; I had to wait until I knew our new production, Aleister's "MAGICK WITHOUT TEARS" was definitely out. The book was produced and bound in Los Angeles with many delays, I have not seen a copy yet; it was mailed to me on the 15th. A copy should be on its way to Robb.

I remember one book you had produced very beautifully: Nietzsche's Antichrist. Do you think there are yet any around?

There is much with which I agree in your judgment of the man Crowley, his interfering with the very people who do their best to help him. When a real job is in progress he would call up half a dozen times a day with new ideas, changes, checking whether things are going forward, etc., until one lost patience - and nerves! I know the underlying cause for it. We have had bloody fights about it. Once, in Berlin, I hung up the receiver but he kept buzzing, through the operator, until Cora could not stand it any more.

I have not been in touch with Regardie, but I shortly plan a trip to Los Angeles and will try to see him. - I have a few (about 4 or 5) of A.C.'s paintings or sketches; did not mention it in my letter to Robb. Tell him, if you see him, that I shall be only too glad to give him one.

As to GOLDEN TWIGS: - I should be very happy if you would publish it. Please tell me more. I have a set of proofs which I believe are your old ones. And another set of proofs which were in course of production with LIBER ALEPH in 1947 when A.C. died. We had paid 100 pounds deposit on the 2 books, and all was lost. (I wanted to visit A.C. in London in 1947, but England refuses a visa to me. (This is from the time of the Crowley vs. Constable etc. case, when I was a witness for A.C., and Scotland Yard soon after went after me - with complications. I suppose you know that I was in Nazi Concentration Camps, and later, when I escaped to Belgium and had a big business there, once more by the French after the Nazis marched in, and I was arrested.)

Well, this is enough gossip for the day. I forget! Cora died in 1942, a year after my return from the French Concentration Camp when I came to the U.S. in 1941. - Kindest regards

Karl Germer

8. Reverence is suggested for any ceremony so that you and others can benefit to the utmost by what is going on.
9. If the Temple is also used by others in the Order, then it is best to leave the place clean after your event. Be considerate.
10. Those conducting a ceremony will make it more effective and bring the power of the whole ceremony through to themselves and the observers if they will memorise their parts.
11. To talk, chatter, whisper, laugh, exclaim during a ceremony would be ruination of the effect of that ceremony for yourself and for others. Social life can be confined to before and after the ceremony. Your silence as an observer will allow the higher Light to grow within you.
12. Temple work benefits you and all others and will benefit everyone even more if there is anything a person can do to help out. It is a good idea to ask beforehand if there is some contribution you can make. This aids in building up the group mind and draws us closer together. All of us are really striving for One Goal, the knowledge of the Divine and the presence of this force among all members in a Temple.

Resolution 456

Board of Directors

[This resolution has long been observed in the United States and informally as a rule of conduct in Australia. It has now been formally adopted by the Australian O.T.O. association and Local Body Officers and initiators are obliged to sensibly inform new candidates and/or visitors to O.T.O. locations of its quite obvious import. — ed.]

CONFIRMED sales or solicitation for sales of illegal substances at a place and time (including time to arrive and depart on the occasion of a meeting) of O.T.O. is grounds for expulsion; and, in the event of complicity by officers of the O.T.O. body, automatically closes the body. In addition, sales of illicit substances or solicitation for sales at a place used solely by O.T.O., regardless of the time of meetings, or by any person so acting as to convey either expressly or otherwise the impression that such sales or solicitation is in any way a part of official O.T.O. activity, shall also fall under the strictures and remedies of expulsion and closure as may be appropriate to the actual status of the person or officer of the official body involved.

FROM THE ARCHIVES:

P. R. Stephensen on Aleister Crowley

A letter from P. R. Stephensen to J. K. Moir

[6 June 1952 EV]

Editor's Introduction

PERCY REGINALD STEPHENSEN (1901–1965 EV) or "Inky" as he was commonly known, was a Queensland Rhodes Scholar who joined Australian expatriate Jack Lindsay in 1927 EV to manage the Fanfrolco Press at Bloomsbury, London. In 1929 EV he started the Mandrake Press, through which he would develop a solid friendship, albeit a brief one, with Aleister Crowley. The recollections in this letter, some 20 odd years since Stephensen and Crowley were last in contact, give an indication of Stephensen's admiration and respect for Crowley. Stephensen's relationship with Crowley has never really been addressed by historians, no doubt due to the brevity of their association and the relative obscurity of information. The Australian writer, Keith Richmond, gives it admirable attention in his introduction "Mandrake and the Magus" to *The Forbidden Lecture* (Mandrake, 1990, Oxon).

Israel Regardie fondly remembers Stephensen as a "good natured, kind, generous, human being who enjoyed living, mental stimulation, good food and drink, sex, and fine literature, especially if the latter had been produced in fine editions", in his introduction to *The Legend of Aleister Crowley* (Falcon, 1983, Phoenix). This commonly available edition ascribes a joint authorship of the work to Israel Regardie and P. R. Stephensen. In fact Regardie only wrote the Introduction and the Epilogue to the present edition and was not considered a co-author to the original work, published by the Mandrake Press. It was solely Stephensen who wrote *The Legend*, with Regardie acting as his secretary, a fact confirmed by Stephensen's papers at the State Library of New South Wales and also by Israel Regardie. It seems a curious arrangement. Stephensen discusses *The Legend* at length in this letter.

Stephensen once described himself to Crowley as "the only living man who can force your [Crowley's] works into the recognition which is their due". The Mandrake Press would publish *The Stratagem* (1929), *Moonchild* (1929), the first two volumes of *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley* (1929), *The Banned Lecture "Gilles de Rais"* (1930) and *The Legend of Aleister Crowley* (1930). Stephensen points out some often overlooked points about *The Confessions* in this letter, including its original title and some of the original dedications. Related details can be found in the Stephensen letter to Gerald Yorke published in *Chimuzy* vol. 3, no 2. Incidentally, Stephensen's earlier publishing associate, the Australian Jack Lindsay (one of the well known Lindsay brothers of Australian artistic circles), was originally introduced to Crowley's works by Norman Robb when Lindsay was living in Sydney prior to moving to London.

Norman Robb was a friend of Frank Bennett's, the latter being well known for originally establishing the Australasian O.T.O. In the 1950s, some thirty years after his association with Bennett, Norman Robb would become a friend and associate of Stephensen's (who was back in Australia) and an avid collector of Crowleyana (he is reasonably well known for his bookshop on Little Collins Street in Melbourne, Victoria, which I believe existed until very recent times).

In the 1950s Stephensen sought to resume publishing Crowley, largely outraged by the work of Crowley's literary executioner John Symonds. Stephensen's proposals would have been the first (and to date, only) Australian editions of Crowley's works and plans went as far as new typescripts of *Golden Twigs* (1953) and of Volume III of *The Confessions* (1956). In the 1950s Karl Germer, who had been acquainted with Stephensen in England through Mandrake, and now as Frater Superior of the O.T.O. and trustee of the Crowley estate encouraged Stephensen's publishing proposals and even expressed hopes that Stephensen could raise the capital to publish the first edition of *Liber Aleph* for him. Stephensen died before any Australian editions were published. His papers, held at the Mitchell Library, indicate that there was quite a bit of interest in Aleister Crowley in the Australian literary community of the 1950s, ironically enough, essentially due to the work of Symonds whom Stephensen so detested. Stephensen often mentioned in later correspondence that he would like to write a brief monograph about Crowley "to even up the score", or at the least write a brief chapter about him in his own autobiography (never written). In the absence of anything resembling these ideas among his papers this letter might serve to indicate what might well have been included in such works. It should be pointed out that Stephensen's interest in Crowley was literary and little else, hence the odd dated or dubious conclusion. However, the reference to the O.T.O. as the "fair-dinkum Rosicrucians" typifies his very "Australian" approach to many such issues. We are grateful to the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, for permission to publish this letter. It may not be reproduced further without application to the Library Council of New South Wales.

P. R. Stephensen: Letter to J. K. Moir

Bethanga Lower, Victoria
6 June 1952

Dear J. K.: Many thanks for sending me the cutting from *The Australian Post*, 5th June, about the Satan-Cult in Melbourne, by Gordon Williams, with its reference to my old friend, Aleister Crowley, as "the Wickedest Man in the World".

I suppose this article is inspired by recent publication of a book entitled *The Great Beast*, which I have not yet seen (but I am getting a copy next week). My brother Eric says that there are references to me in it, "not exactly complimentary". The article by Gordon Williams is typical of hundreds of articles against Crowley that have been printed in the English gutter-press for the past thirty years. There is nothing new or true in it. This is the kind of thing you have to expect since *The Argus* was bought by the dirtiest, slimiest newspaper-mob in Fleet Street. Men like Clive Turnbull and Peter Russe should be ashamed to work with such a filthy crowd.

I first met Aleister Crowley in 1929, when I was running the Mandrake Press in London. He walked into my office, followed by a porter who was carrying about one hundredweight of Crowley's unpublished typescripts, including a colossal autobiography. At that time I suppose Crowley was about fifty-five years of age, and I was about twenty seven. I had heard of him as a very "dangerous" person, the "wickedest man in the world", and so on, but to me he seemed quite harmless. In the course of time I read his manuscripts, and decided to begin publishing them. I took no particular interest in his "magic" (black or white), but I viewed him then, and still view him, as one of the greatest prose-writers England has ever produced; and a good poet, too.

For about a year I was associated with him a great deal, as his publisher. I published one of his long short stories in the *Mandrake Booklets*, also a pamphlet on *Gilles de Rais* (text of a lecture he was prevented from giving at Oxford); also a novel, *Moonchild*, and finally the first two volumes of his Autobiography, which he entitled *The Spirit of Solitude*, but I altered the title, with his permission, to *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*. He dedicated the first volume to Augustus John, J. W. N. Sullivan (mathematician) and me! ("To P. R. Stephensen, who saw the point").

Crowley had enough material to run a publishing house for years, and I intended to publish it all for him, but he frightened hell out of my then partner, a superstitious Jew named Teddy Goldston, a bookseller, and after about a year, we wound up the Mandrake Press, leaving the Third Volume of the Autobiography still unpublished (though set in type).

To prepare the way for a full programme of publishing his books, I wrote a short literary biography of him, which was published in book form (5000 copies printed and sold) entitled *The Legend of Aleister Crowley* (by P. R. Stephensen). I say "short", but it was 200 pages. I haven't a copy of this by me, and have never seen a copy in Australia, but it is a book I am proud of, as it entailed an enormous amount of work, going through all his publications and manuscripts.

He inherited a fortune, about £40,000, when he was a young man, a student at Cambridge, but went through it in ten years or less, financing his own publications, principally poetry and religious philosophy, or "magic", dozens of books. He also travelled all over the world, Mexico, India, Burma, Egypt, etc., climbing mountains (he was an expert alpinist), and studying various religions. While I was writing

his biography, I installed him and his then wife (a quadroon Negress) in a cottage alongside my own weekend place at Knockholt in Kent, where he had a room full of his publications, press cuttings and manuscripts. I talked to him for hours, and played chess with him, also for hours. He had a secretary, a Jew from New York, named Regardie, to whom he dictated his memoirs. I later employed Regardie as my office secretary. In one way and another, I got to know a great deal about Aleister Crowley and I put this into my book about him.

This book tells the truth, as I was not a "disciple", but only a very good friend of "the wickedest man in the world". He was not wicked at all, but a benevolent old chap, and a genius as well! He was one of the wittiest men who ever lived. Many people were frightened of his supposed "magic" powers, but my wife and I were not in the slightest frightened of him. Winifred could manage him like a child when he sometimes got temperamental. She would scold him and say, "Now Aleister, behave yourself!" and he'd be as meek as a lamb.

The people in the village of Knockholt all liked him, and were not in the slightest frightened by him. One Winter's day, he went strolling down the street, muffled up like a Polar Bear, singing at the top of his voice (and he had a very powerful, melodious voice, could have been an opera singer):

*Oh my gawd it's bloody cold
In the bloody rigging;
Sister Susan's growing old
All along o' frigging . . .*

Many more verses I can't remember, a sailor's song. The local yokels loved him, and I think everybody who really knew him felt the same, that he was essentially a kindly person, not at all wicked. He wouldn't hurt a fly.

How he got his reputation as the "wickedest man in the world" is a complicated story. He was a 33° Mason, the highest degree, inner group, and apparently tried to introduce reforms into the rituals, which the others wouldn't accept, so they turfed him out. That is one version. Then he got the Jews up against him by publishing their secret Kabbala. He was a tremendous scholar, knew Latin, Greek, French, German, Hebrew, Arabic, Hindostani, Ancient Egyptian, Sanskrit. Next, he got the Roman Catholics and all the clergy up against him, by doing research into Medieval "Magic", history of the Alchemists, etc., and publishing the so-called "Black Mass" rituals, to call us "spirits" or "demons".

Then he got himself notorious by taking a cow up to the top of Matterhorn, supposed to be the hardest climb in Europe. He did this after a famous English Alpinist had won glory by taking his wife to the summit, the first woman to climb it. This climber inscribed his deed in the Record Book of the Alpine Club: "Took my wife to the summit of the Matterhorn", and the date. Next entry was Crowley's: "Took my cow to the summit."

Another thing that made him notorious. One of Jacob Epstein's first sculptures was a nude boy, placed on the tomb of Oscar Wilde in Paris, supposedly at Crowley's suggestion and expense! There was some fun at the unveiling, as Crowley rigged up a complicated arrangement

of thin green silk cords, invisible to the spectators, a crowd of all the arty and literary mob in Paris. He had a man concealed somewhere behind a tree. While some dignitary was making a speech, extolling Oscar Wilde, Crowley stepped forward, muttered incantations, then yelled ABRACADABRA, and the veiling flew up into the air, revealing Epstein's naked boy. Great sensation.

This prank was too much, even for Paris, so somebody at the British Legation had a bronze fig-leaf put over the boy's pudenda. Crowley souvenired this fig-leaf a few days later, and turned up in the Cafe Royal at London, wearing kilts, with the fig-leaf as a sporran.

There are thousands of yarns like this about Crowley and his practical jokes, but unfortunately for him, his enemies couldn't take a joke. He married the sister of Gerald Kelly, President of the Royal Academy. She divorced him, after much ructions, because of his adultery with a beautiful Australian girl, a violinist (concert-player, a virtuoso), perhaps you know her name. This was a scandal, as she was supposed to be the "priestess" in some of his "magical" shenanigans.

Later, he went to Sicily, and founded an Abbey of Thelema, with the same motto over the door as in Rabelais' Abbey: DO WHAT THOU WILT.

Critics said this meant "Do as you like", but Crowley said it meant human beings must exercise their Free Will, or power of choice, and that nothing should be prohibited. In other words, if you remove temptation, there is no virtue in resisting temptation. So he had drugs, cocaine, opium, daggers, poison, ropes for people to hang themselves with, and all other kinds of temptations in his "Abbey", just to test "will-power". Among the temptations was an artist's model, named Betty May, a gypsy-looking cockney girl, who was Epstein's model for years. She was married to a cove named Raoul, a harmless poor galoot, who went with her to live in the "Abbey". This Raoul got typhoid, or some other disease there, and died.

Betty May then went back to London, and, being hard up, sold a "sensational" story to the London newspapers about Crowley's goings-on in Sicily. She said that her husband had been "murdered". Off course no charge was ever laid, as the local coroners and police had investigated, and certified death from natural causes; but the newspapers didn't print that fact. Instead of returning to England to sue for libel, Crowley ignored the stupid newspaper attack (as he considered it), but, from that time onwards, Fleet Street had his story as a grand stand-by, whenever they were short of sensations, and kept on publishing it, with additions in similar vein to the article by Gordon Williams in *The Post*, practically all baloney, mentioning secret cults, witchcraft, Black magic, Black Mass, and all the rest of it.

As far as I could make out, Crowley's little band of disciples, about six all told, never did anything more sinister than Masons do when they "ride the goat", with a rigmale of "initiations" etc., or wearing fancy dress, such as priests and parsons wear, burning incense and all the rest of it, but of course his religion was unofficial.

He claimed to be the Head of the Rosicrucian

(or "Rosy Cross") Order, founded in the Middle Ages, or earlier. This was the fair dinkum Rosicrucians, not the bogus mob under that name in California, who have pinched Crowley's ideas and commercialised them.

If there is any Black Magic going on in Melbourne today, I suppose it's these Californian "Rosicrucians", a batch of ratbags, nothing to do with Crowley, I'll bet.

From all this you'll realise that the notorious Aleister Crowley, "the wickedest man in the world", as that twerp Williams calls him, was in reality a very benevolent old gentleman (something like J. K. Moir, and nearly as harmless!)

Unfortunately for him, being a poet, he had no idea of the excitement that his fooling about with magick (as he spelled it) would arouse in the minds of superstitious people. He was like our pal, Frank Clune, a try-anything-oncer, but his experiments extended into fields of mysticism which frightened the clergy and other believers in the Devil.

When you realise that *The Argus* published *Astrology*, which is pure or impure Black magic, how can these newspaper scrawlers pretend to be a good influence in the community. They are inculcating superstition,

whereas poor old Aleister Crowley at least was a serious student of the Occult sciences, so-called, which he tried to bring out into the open. ("Theosophy" and similar cults are not attacked by the press.)

Crowley died in London a couple of years ago, in poverty I believe. Now that he is safely dead, some filthy swine has written a book about him, serving up all the old libels and sensational bunkum. In the meantime, nobody except myself appears to have seen the main point, which is that he was a magnificent writer of English prose, and also one of the best English poets of his day. He was fated to be a victim of sensationalism. One of his early books was a novel, entitled *The Diary of a Drug Fiend*, which was a tremendous sale. Of course it was only a novel, not an autobiography, but his enemies at once said that the Drug Fiend was Crowley himself! Being a try-anything-oncer, I suppose he tried the effect of drugs on himself, before writing the book, but he was certainly never a "drug-addict". He had far too much brains for that, and had to keep himself in perfect condition to climb mountains. He led a party to climb Mount Godwin Austen, in the Himalayas, and is the only man who ever

led a party to the summit of that peak. How the heck could he do things like that, and also win Chess Tournaments, if he was taking drugs? I had him under close observation for a year, and I'm quite sure he wasn't taking drugs or dope. Nothing stronger than coffee and brandy - but he like plenty of those!

R.I.P. Aleister Crowley. I had no intention of writing such a long letter, but that splurge by Gordon Williams made me indignant. Have you a copy of my book on him, or could you get a copy from London, or do you know where there is a copy in Australia? If I write my own Memoirs, I'll need to include a chapter on Crowley.

Another of my 'genius' pals, Karel Zoubek, is in Kew Asylum at present. I am going to Melbourne next week to visit him there. I'll also visit you, in your office, unless I find you in Kew! Have been ten years silent since Bert Evatt's great victory in democracy in March, 1942. I might start writing again soon, as I have plenty to say.

Kindest wishes, cheer up,
Yours,
the Hillbilly Hermit, PRS

Open letter to OTO

from David Bottrill of the Eleutheria Society

On Saturday 23rd October 1993 Steve King and other members of the OTO, at the invitation of the Eleutheria Society, travelled to Canberra to give a public lecture on the OTO and to perform the Gnostic Mass.

The event, the fifth in a series of public seminars put on by the Eleutheria Society, was special for a number of reasons. This was the OTO's first performance of the Mass in Canberra and it was also the first publicly open ritual of its type to be performed here.

The evening opened with a brief lecture by Steve. In his lucid and informative speech he provided a summary of the Orders history, practices and beliefs. This placed the Mass which followed in context and stimulated discussion and questions from the audience.

The audience was diverse and ranged from the antagonistic (SOTO), the judgemental (Wiccans) and the openly curious, genuinely enquiring and interested (the public), for whom the Eleutheria Lectures were designed.

Following the lecture, and after the Mass a number of questions were asked. There were the beginnings of some pointed questions concerning the Motta/SOTO issue but as this was marginal to the main concern of the evening Steve offered to continue that line privately, at the conclusion of the main talk.

Most people had come for the main event - the Mass. The Mass was a masterly working of this sublime ritual. The staging of the event in a spacious hall, with the altar magnificently dominating the raised stage, was perfect. The team from the OTO performed the Mass confidently and with a challenging alertness.

The immediate effect of the rite on the audience was tangible, with Wiccans responding to the resonances of their own cultic rituals, the Christians and others recognising and responding to the universal sacramental elements also.

The long term effects of the performance of the Mass will probably be slow in manifesting, but certainly seeds have been sown. A number of people have evinced an interest in witnessing the Mass again and will probably travel to Sydney to do so. The Mass and talk have raised the profile of the OTO in the Federal capital in a clear and unequivocal way.

I would like to publicly offer my thanks to Steve and the other members of the team for what turned out to be a truly ecumenical event - an event unmarred by the usual factional disputes of the pagan/occult community in Canberra.

I consider that this was the most successful event hosted by the Eleutheria Society. It combined information and demonstration of the OTO's beliefs and methods. It was a daring initiative, on behalf of Steve and the Mass team to travel to, and perform in, Canberra, for which I have great admiration and wish to reiterate my thanks and appreciation to them all.

David Bottrill

2/11/93